

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 SAM-01 AID-20 EB-11 DRC-01 OMB-01 /151 W

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R 020801Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9996

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 0438

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SN, AS

SUBJECT: VISIT OF AUSTRALIAN OPPOSITION LEADER SNEDDEN

FOLLOWING ARE MAIN POINTS OF CONVERSATION I HAD WITH
SNEDDEN, LEADER OF AUSTRALIAN OPPOSITION, WHO CALLED
ON ME JANUARY 31:

A. SNEDDEN SAID HE HAD BEEN VERY WELL RECEIVED BY
SINGAPORE AUTHORITIES AND WAS GREATLY IMPRESSED BY
SUCCESS OF SINGAPORE'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS. HE HAD AN
HOUR AND A HALF MEETING WITH PM LEE AND SAID HE THOUGHT
LEE'S VIEWS ON WORLD AFFAIRS WERE SOUND "SINCE THEY
AGREE TOTALLY WITH MY OWN". MAIN TOPIC OF CONVERSATION
WITH LEE WAS IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUED US PRESENCE AND
INVOLVEMENT IN SEA. LEE SAID OUR INTERNAL POLITICAL
DIFFICULTIES HAD WEAKENED OUR ABILITY TO PROVIDE WORLD
LEADERSHIP AND THAT DANGER EXISTS THAT OUR INTERESTS IN
SEA AND ABILITY TO PLAY A ROLE MIGHT ERODE IF OUR DOMESTIC
DIFFICULTIES WERE NOT SETTLED SOON. SNEDDEN SAID HE BELIEVED
AUSTRALIA WAS IN BEST POSITION TO INFLUENCE USG TO
MAINTAIN INTEREST IN REGION, BUT TO EXERT SUCH INFLUENCE
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GOA WOULD HAVE TO PLAY A MORE ACTIVE AND POSITIVE ROLE IN

REGIONAL AFFAIRS AND BE MORE SUPPORTIVE OF US POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES IN REGION. HE CRITICIZED WHITLAM GOVERNMENT FOR ITS INTEMPERATE AND UNCALLED-FOR CRITICISMS OF US AND FOR WITHDRAWING AUSTRALIAN GROUND FORCES FROM ANZUK. CONTRARY TO PRESS REPORTS HERE, HOWEVER, HE SAID IF AND WHEN HE BECOMES PRIME MINISTER - WHICH HE WAS PRETTY CONFIDENT WOULD HAPPEN - HE WOULD NOT REVERSE DECISION ON PULLOUT OF AUSTRALIAN TROOPS SINCE "NEW SITUATION WOULD THEN EXIST AND WE CAN'T TURN BACK THE CLOCK."

B. SNEDDEN SAID WHITLAM'S IDEA OF FORMING NEW ASIAN ORGANIZATION WAS TOTALLY UNREALISTIC. AUSTRALIA, BEING A DEVELOPED COUNTRY, HAD LITTLE IN COMMON WITH THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES OF REGION AND IT MADE NO SENSE TO ERECT A NEW ORGANIZATION WITHOUT ANY IDEA OF WHAT IT WOULD DO. HE SAID AUSTRALIA SHOULD AUGMENT ITS AID EFFORTS IN REGION, BUT THIS COULD BE DONE BILATERALLY OR CONCEIVABLY THROUGH ASEAN. AUSTRALIA SHOULD HAVE SOME INFORMAL LIAISON RELATIONSHIP WITH ASEAN, BUT AUSTRALIA'S INTERESTS WERE BEST SERVED THROUGH BILATERAL RELATIONSHIPS.

C. HIGH COMMISSIONER PARKINSON, WHO ACCOMPANIED SNEDDEN, SAID HE WAS SURPRISED THAT LEE DID NOT MENTION SUBJECT OF OIL DURING CONVERSATION WHICH IN RECENT WEEKS HAS BEEN LEE'S MAIN PREOCCUPATION.
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